

# Communicating Visions for Urban Development

A micro-study of a governance process

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Cover: Collaboration at the planning table.  
(photo: Måns Norlin)

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## Communicating Visions for Urban Development: A micro-study of a governance process

### Abstract

This thesis studies the topic of policy making in the context of producing a comprehensive plan. The thesis uses the case of a municipality in Sweden. Contributing to the understanding of how governance processes can be performed, this thesis studies policy making in a collaborative situation. A form of micro-study is used to scrutinize in detail the dialogues between participants. The thesis applies Membership Categorization Analysis and Conversation Analysis to uncover the participants' accomplishments. The approaches reveal a variety of ways the participants perform planning, how visions and strategies are implemented in practice and how participants can reach agreement on planning issues.

The study provides planning research with further understanding of the situatedness and epistemology of policy making, and it brings to light the variety of ways participants in policy making can enter and inform discussions, thereby enhancing the level of democracy in governance processes.

*Keywords:* Collaborative planning, governance, planning theory, planning practice, situated planning, epistemology, micro-study, membership categorization analysis, conversation analysis.

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## Sammanfattning

Denna avhandling studerar en deliberativ demokratiprocess med att ta fram en översiktsplan. Avhandlingen använder ett fall från en kommun i Sverige. För att bidra till förståelsen av hur deliberativa processer kan genomföras, studerar denna avhandling en kollaborativ planeringssituation. En form av mikro-studier används för att i detalj granska diskussionerna mellan deltagarna. Avhandlingen tillämpar 'membership categorization analysis' och konversationsanalys för att avtäckas deltagarnas prestationer. Dessa tillvägagångssätt avtäckar en variation av olika sätt deltagarna använder för att utföra planering på. Tillvägagångssätten visar också på hur visioner och strategier kan genomföras i praktiken och hur deltagarna kan komma överens om planeringsfrågor.

Studien förser planeringsforskning med ytterligare förståelse av de situationella och de epistemologiska aspekterna vid planeringspolitik. Därmed bidrar studien till att förstå sambandet mellan teori och praktik i planeringsforskningen. Studien visar också på de olika sätt deltagare i planeringsprocesser kan komma in i, och informera, diskussioner, vilket bidrar till att berika förståelsen till de socio-kulturella förståelsen för deliberativa demokratiprocesser.

## Dedication

To my grandmother Elin Märta Emilia Norlin. For her unconditional love, something everyone needs and everyone deserves, but something so difficult to give and receive. She had the ability to make it into something natural. Her last words at the age of 101 were “Thank you”.

*[Public policy] practices are no more merely “bureaucratic” than they are just “political”, no more just the exercise of analytical reason than they are only filled with intuitions and feelings. As a result, the humanities and sociocultural social sciences are as important as economics and the natural sciences as important as mathematical logic in providing understanding and inspiration to cultivate the “art of judgment” in public policy contexts.*

Patsy Healey

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my friends, family and colleagues. The help and support of people around is what has made this work possible. It might be one name of the cover, but it is truly a joint effort behind the thesis. Especially I would like to thank the research team and supervisors, and also my colleagues at the department, at the university and around the world. These people has inspired and helped me become a better researcher and taught me skills in the practice of urban planning and governance. The conversations and discussions have contributed facilitating the process, and is what has made the process interesting and contributed to my intellectual development.

My appreciation and gratitude goes out as well to the persons who in different ways have influenced my work and me during the last years. With the risk of unwillingly leaving someone out I will try to include some here: first of all the research school APULA, its initiators and my fellow students within the research school. The people from all the universities involved in QDAAL for fruitful discussions, and eye opening presentations from across the world. The people and colleagues at SLU in Ultuna, the Principle of SLU, the Faculty Board of 2012 and that of 2013. The administrative staff at the department as well as at the faculty and also the staff at the library. My colleagues at the University of Queensland for their input and support. The PhD-council at SLU Alnarp, the SACO-s board at SLU. The people at MOVIMUM.

Thank you also to the people at the anonymous strategy group and the City Planning Office at the municipality in Sweden for making their meetings and time available to be filmed. To Gunnar Cerwén for helping me to capture the meetings on video and audio. My thanks go out also to those 120 odd people who attended the meetings and agreed to be filmed during the workshops. These people will remain anonymous for ethical reasons.

Måns Norlin, March 2014.

# Contents

List of Publications	9
Preface	11
1 Introduction	15
1.1 Aim and purpose	15
1.2 Research questions	16
1.3 Scope	17
1.4 Outline of thesis	17
2 Methodological and Theoretical Positioning	19
2.1 Planning	19
2.1.1 Governance	19
2.1.2 Planning processes as genuine conversations	21
2.1.3 Critical views on theories of planning as a genuine conversation	23
2.1.4 Studies of practice in planning research	26
2.1.5 Situated planning theory and practice	28
2.2 Micro-studies	31
2.2.1 Conversation analysis	32
2.2.2 Membership Categorization Analysis	33
3 The Planning Process Under Scrutiny	36
3.1 Municipal planning in Sweden	36
3.1.1 Municipalities in Sweden	36
3.1.2 The comprehensive plan	37
3.1.3 Densification as a strategy for sustainable development	39
3.2 The workshop-series in this study	40
3.2.1 The practical outlines of the workshops	41
3.2.2 Description of exercises in the workshop, the 'sun-exercise'	42
3.2.3 Description of exercises in the workshops, the vision-task	43
3.3 Research design	44
3.4 The data	45
4 Summary of Papers	49

4.1	Identifying 'plannables' regarding the topic of densification in planning, Paper I	49
4.2	Listening carefully: Understanding in a deliberative planning process by the use of a micro-study, Paper II	50
5	Concluding Discussion	52
6	Future Research	54
	References	56
	<b>Papers</b>	



## List of Publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

- I Norlin, M., Qviström, M., Larsson, A., Bergeå, H.L. Identifying ‘plannables’ regarding the topic of densification in planning. *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*. Accepted with major revisions in November 2013, resubmitted in February 2014.
- II Norlin, M., Bergeå, H.L., Larsson, A., Qviström, M. Listening carefully: Understanding in a deliberative planning process by the use of a micro-study. *Submitted paper*.

Papers I-II are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.

In both papers, Norlin has been the main author and the main developer of the ideas, the planning and the accomplishment of the study. Norlin has created the admittance to the field and he also completed the fieldwork. Norlin also planned and performed the collection of data and he also planned and performed the transcription thereof. The selection of sequences to include in Paper I was done by Norlin and Bergeå, and for Paper II by Norlin, Bergeå, Larsson and Qviström. The illustrations were created in the cases they were created and chosen by Norlin. Norlin also performed the analysis of both studies in collaboration with Bergeå (see also data collection below for further information on partners in analysis of data). Qviström, Larsson and Bergeå together with Norlin structured and processed the material and they all contributed to the different phases of the writing process. All co-authors have been active discussants during the entire process and were active writers of

both the papers. The ideas have originated from Norlin, but were developed and synthesized by the co-authors.

Norlin developed the theory, and the supervisors have made comments on content and structure, with the greatest contribution by Mattias Qviström regarding planning theory and Hanna Bergeå regarding methodology.

## Preface

This thesis is written for all those interested in democracy and the development of society with special attention to planning of urban areas. For those involved in policy development and management, it provides a contribution to the debate regarding whether communication in situations where democratic work is conducted can be open and inclusive or if it is too politicized<sup>1</sup> for democratic work to take place in such situations. This debate points to the many ways possible to generate public policy and debate that can transform and adapt. For social scientists in urban planning and geography, politics and policy it also provides an inter-disciplinary approach to studying the ongoing transformation of public policy making.

The thesis makes use of a sociocultural approach to the planning field and utilizes methods developed for understanding and scrutinizing communication at a detailed level. There are advantages to such an inter-disciplinary approach. These advantages make it possible to shed light from a different, and possibly even original, angle on central aspects of the field of planning research. However, there can also be problems when different research traditions traverse each other. For example, the adaption and implementation of novel methods into the existing field of planning research can be difficult and strenuous. This is because the field of planning research has already established its valuable and constructive methods and means of performing research. The point in finding a new angle to this interesting field of research is to complement earlier findings from a new perspective.

Coming from an academic background in communication theory, social sciences and theoretical philosophy, I have had an interest in theory and

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Camilo Calderon's thesis from 2013 on planning processes being politicized.

<sup>2</sup> Thereby making power something distinct from factual knowledge of the case at hand. This view of designing the argument for the benefit of one's own agenda reminds of the use of the

methods, interaction and communication, social conduct and social relations for a considerable amount of time. This interest has created a curiosity about democratic work and policy making processes because this field of research combines communication with relevance to society. I have had the fortunate opportunity to combine this academic background with practice oriented research projects relating to public policy making and urban and spatial planning. These projects have involved a variety of actors from private and local authorities in Sweden and Denmark regarding how to engage citizens and how to make them express themselves and participate in the ongoing work for democracy (not included in the material of this thesis). These positive experiences have further enhanced my interest in the social organization of society and different forms of democracy. All these experiences resulted in the formulation of questions regarding how society is organized and how its citizens form society.

This thesis is based on the experiences from following and studying the process of creating a comprehensive plan for a municipality in Sweden. The municipality studied is not mentioned by name as to uphold the anonymity of the participants. This policy making process started in 2010 and continues to take place during the time this thesis is written in 2014. After engaging in this project, my interest turned to how the participants in the process organized and performed work to build society through communication and other tools.

Communication is essential to humans. It is with the help of communication that we learn new skills, turn ideas into reality and even take people to the moon. But we do something even more important through communication; and that is, exercising our right and taking the opportunity to contribute to the development of society and humankind through democracy. It is the possibility to communicate that has made it possible for humankind to create societies, solve problems and grasp opportunities. It is through the interactions between people that society is developed and organized. Here, within the details of communication, the sometimes intangible ideas, strategies and visions are made concrete and tangible with the help of language. This is where ideas and strategies are tested and related to peoples' own experiences and knowledge regarding the outside world. This is also where many questions exist relating to communication and interaction such as how to open discussions; who should have their voices heard, included and represented in democratic work; how are these voices raised and taken into a democratic conversation; who is to ask the question and in relation to what? Further, it is important to clarify the foundation and verification of an argument or point of view about how to develop society.

Therefore, this thesis is concerned with the details of such communication. It studies the democratic work conducted in planning situations by scrutinizing this communication and interaction in detail to uncover the practical accomplishments in democratic work. By revealing these practical accomplishments and often disregarded smaller details, this thesis identifies and draws out and highlights the larger picture of planning processes such as the ideas, visions and strategies.



# 1 Introduction

This thesis uses micro-level analysis in the field of planning research with the aim to contribute to the understanding of how communication in planning processes is performed. Thereby, it shows how democratic work, in the form of governance processes, can be developed and transformed. Furthermore, it contributes to the theoretical debate in planning research and also studies planning practice by looking at how abstract notions, visions and strategies are made concrete; thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice.

## 1.1 Aim and purpose

This thesis aims to study a governance process consisting of meetings where the participants have the opportunity to communicate openly. More specifically, it aims to reveal how dialogues in the case of a collaborative planning process are able to produce knowledge for planning.

The goal is to study how interactions in such a governance process can be practically accomplished. This is not an easy task since such interactions are rich in detail and have a density and complexity to them that is hard to capture, but have great relevance in how planning is actually accomplished. The purpose of such close scrutinizing is to increase the understanding of this complex landscape of interaction in policy making processes and to learn more about how planning can be performed as well as what planning is.

To detect and obtain these details in the interactions, forms of micro-analysis have been applied to the case. Until now, this approach has been scarce in planning research and the approach aims at reaching the details of communication that can be hard to capture and therefore escapes attention. Therefore, this thesis uncovers ways in which participants in collaborative

planning perform planning, implement visions and strategies and also it looks at how they reach results.

## 1.2 Research questions

The research questions addressed in this case are as follows:

- How are visions and strategies practically produced in an ongoing collaborative planning practice?
- How can detailed studies of how participants in a planning-related workshop “listen carefully” to each other help to enrich the understanding of a governance process?
- Can participants in an ongoing collaborative planning process reach agreement but not necessarily consensus, and in that case how?



### 1.3 Scope

The study comprises of a workshop-series designed and organized by a city Planning Office at a municipality in Sweden. The event is in the present, the second decennium of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study takes place on the strategic level of municipal planning because the workshop-series is concerned with the vision and strategy of the future city. The workshop-series is in the beginning of a policy making process, which is to result in a comprehensive plan. This thesis is concerned with the planning context of this strategy document that is about urban sustainable development.

The empirical part of the thesis makes use of a methodological approach in the form of micro studies, which is less commonly used in planning research. This methodological approach makes it possible to study two facets of the planning process. First, people's accomplishments, such as speech acts or other language games and relations such as power relations. This thesis looks at a workshop-series where open and creative discussions are encouraged. Within the workshops a variety of different speech acts take place and the participants also display ways of reasoning and placing arguments. It is important to mention that there were no politicians present throughout the workshop series. This allows for studying the arguments without having to consider political relations between certain politicians, or politicians and other stakeholders.

The work does not include multiple cases and phases of collaborative planning processes, but instead scrutinizes the interactions of a single part of the process in such detail that a variety of voices can clearly be distinguished. Thereby, the workshop-series can be seen as consisting of a number of cases that uncover, at a micro-level, how planning is conducted communicatively. This high level of scrutiny makes it possible to look at communication in detail and relate a speaker's statement in a conversation to the next speaker's statement and uncover their juxtaposed meanings.

Due to ethical considerations concerning the anonymity of the participants in the workshop, the name of the municipality is not disclosed.

### 1.4 Outline of thesis

This thesis is a synthesis of two separate parts. The first part is divided into six chapters.

The Preface introduces the writer and creates a backdrop for the thesis in relation to governance processes. The first chapter introduces the thesis. The second chapter elaborates on the research in planning and planning theory as

well as the methodology relevant to this thesis and the included papers. The third chapter is concerned with the planning process studied in this thesis and helps the reader to get closer to the case and its setting. Chapter four gives a short summary of Paper I and Paper II and its results. Chapter five provides a discussion and chapter six concludes with suggestions for further research.

The second part (Papers) consists of the two studies, Paper I and Paper II.

## 2 Methodological and Theoretical Positioning

### 2.1 Planning

In this chapter, planning theory is related to planning practice and forms of micro-studies are described as a way of examining this planning practice in detail. This approach is used to uncover aspects of the planning practice that are relevant to planning theory and that, thanks to this approach, are now observable and possible to highlight and discuss.

The thesis has taken its primary perspectives from the ongoing discussion and debate in planning research of today. In this field there is, of course, a great variety of perspectives and active scholars. This thesis discusses the field and point to a way forward.

#### 2.1.1 Governance

This section shows how the planning process can be related to governance. The term “governance” is used in a variety of ways. A broad definition at an empirical or practical level describes governance as “any kind of practice centered on resolving collective action problems in the public sphere or realm” (citation from Healey, 2009, p. 288; see also Cars et al., 2002; Healey, 2007). The definition was introduced by Patsy Healey, an influential researcher within the field of planning research. Her definition points to the resolution of issues concerning society and shared values and interests. Elsewhere (Bevir, 2012) government is contrasted with, governance, where government is said to mean different forms of representative resolutions, while governance points to participatory or collaborative forms of resolutions to societal issues. The

development and use of participatory and collaborative forms of governance stems from the insight that formal, bureaucratic and representative decision processes seem to fail in solving societal issues in the best interest of the public. This deficiency seems especially evident when trying to find solutions to wicked problems, such as sustainability (Healey, 2009). The step towards participatory and collaborative forms of problem solving is therefore a step in the direction of governance replacing government in stimulating and adhering to the interests of civil society.

Healey (2009) describes planning processes as governance processes in Western societies by pointing to the way planning research has raised “awareness of the relational complexity of socio-spatial processes and the pluralistic nature of contemporary formal polities” (ibid., p. 287). Thereby, Healey states that the last decades of planning research have been concerned with socio-spatial processes linked to multiple ideas of policy making.

Some researchers stress the aspects of power involved in public policy making (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 1998a; 1998b; Healy, 2009; Forester, 2013). These scholars state that planning processes are about the balancing of resources and are issues of trust, funds and questions of knowledge. For example, Stephen Healy (2009) points to the importance for research to acknowledge that “asymmetries in power, resources and trust” are fundamental prerequisites for deliberative approaches to public participation that promote dialogue and discussion.

This perspective of power in planning processes has influences from political theoreticians. One theoretician often referred to in this context is Foucault (1980; 1984). Flyvbjerg has, at times, been an advocate of Foucault (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 1998b) and a study of his concerns the power relations in the Chamber of parliament in Aalborg, Denmark (Flyvbjerg, 1998a). The view of these relations one of conflict: “It arms itself for war. The agenda is set not by a will to knowledge but by the will to power.” (Flyvbjerg, 1998a, p. 68). Thus, the quest to find the most rational argument is not one of attaining the best understanding of the needs and premises of the situation at hand. Rather the best argument is the one that accumulates the most power for the one designing the argument. Therefore the most rational argument is the argument that is best designed to win the debate. Furthermore, Flyvbjerg argues for focus to be placed on rationality, which makes the modernist democracy susceptible to being dominated by power. This is because power works on the premises of power, not the premises of reason or arguments based on knowledge (ibid. p. 234).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thereby making power something distinct from factual knowledge of the case at hand. This view of designing the argument for the benefit of ones own agenda reminds of the use of the

There are attempts in planning research to solve the problems that arise by focusing on the political aspects of policy making processes with the help of practical solutions. For example, Innes and Booher (1999) suggest that if collaborative processes are to be successful, it has to be acknowledged that they consist of negotiations. This can be seen as a type of “divergent interaction” defined as a situation where opinions oppose each other (Warr & O'Neill, 2006). According to Innes and Booher if the processes are seen as negotiations where people have divergent interests, it is possible to identify the problems of collaborative processes where divergent interests exist and thereby find creative solutions to the problems that might arise. Another attempt is to engage ‘collaborative managers’, that can help the process to succeed by limiting the negative risks of power to acceptable levels and possible to handle and thereby assuring the collaborative process continues (Bardach, 1998). Bardach describes the foundation of collaboration as consisting of negotiation about how involved participants perform “exhortation, explication, persuasion, give and take” (Bardach, 1998 p. 238). Calderon (2013) brings up the need for an more understanding directed more towards the political aspects of governance processes and the design of the urban realm, because there are many stakeholders involved in the planning process.

These perspectives all recognize the aspects of power involved in the planning processes; however, this does not mean that a governance process shouldn't be strived for. Several of the scholars mentioned above states that problems comes with the fact that policy making are political in that interests oppose each other. Admitting to this makes it possible to further improve the processes and make it into better and more appropriate forms of governance processes. This section has shown that there are many scholars that nowadays regard planning processes as a form, or a variety of forms, of governance processes.

### 2.1.2 Planning processes as genuine conversations

The branch of planning theory directed towards governance processes that promotes dialogue and discussion has been influenced by Jürgen Habermas (1975; 1984). In its most deliberative forms, this branch aspires to transform

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concept of “realism” in the study of international relations (Nye & Welch, 2009), where relations are seen as consisting of actors with rationality based on arguments that are based on self-interest. This tradition of thought stems from, among others, Machiavelli (1994) whom also Flyvbjerg refers to, and Hobbes (1981). In the field of international relations this stance is seen as contrasting to more negotiation based approaches of how to handle relations on an international level.

policy making processes into open conversations (e.g. Allmendinger, 2009; Healy, 2009). This type of open conversation is referred to as a 'genuine conversation', or 'ideal communication' as termed by Habermas (especially 1984). The process is based on equal terms for all participants including an equal amount of time and access given to everyone involved. Furthermore, open and unrestricted discussions and information exchange are fundamental rights to be upheld.

The concept of a genuine conversation as described by Habermas, is one that makes it possible for a group to reach something new and creative instead of just accumulating individual perspectives. Such a genuine conversation involves 'communicative actions'. In a communicative action the plans of action are negotiated between the involved actors until a consensus is reached. According to Bolton (2005), Habermas himself credited his term 'communicative action' to the work of George Herbert Mead (1934) and Harold Garfinkel (1967) "for helping give paradigmatic significance to communicative action" (Bolton, 2005 p. 8).

Such a group effort as described above can be seen as a joint activity of social learning (Shotter, 1990; 1999). What the Habermas' theory suggests is that, because the result of the conversation is produced jointly, it is not based on individual interests. Thereby, the outcome of such a discussion is supposed to be the ideal solution for all parties involved. This is the reaching of consensus. Therefore, the emphasis is on including *all* concerned stakeholders at the table.

Some scholars have criticized this view of a genuine conversation for its normative aspects. (see mainly section 2.1.3 below). Healey (2009) does not deny the normative aspect, instead she argues for the righteousness of a normative focus by referring to the philosopher Richard J. Bernstein: "Rather it means that we seek to discover some common ground to reconcile differences through debate, conversation and dialogue." (Bernstein 1983 p. 223, in Healey, 2009, p. 283).

The four criteria put forward by Habermas for achieving the ideal speech situation, which is what a genuine conversation is suppose to be, are following: comprehensibility, sincerity, legitimacy and accuracy (Allmendinger, 2009). Forester developed this further and points to the importance of focusing on content and context (Forester, 1989). He provides a list of suggestions for how to accomplish an ideal communication situation as described by Allmendinger, (2009, p. 215):

- Cultivate community networks of liaisons and contacts.
- Listen carefully.
- Notify less organized interests in the planning process.

- Educate citizens and community organizations.
- Supply technical and political information.
- Ensure that non-professionals have access to documents and information.
- Encourage community-based groups to press for full information on proposed projects.
- Develop skills to work with groups.
- Emphasize the importance of building their own power, even before negotiations begin.
- Encourage independent, community-based project reviews.
- Anticipate political/economic pressure.

These premises all target possibilities to achieve social learning in joint activities and thereby reaching consensus. Their function is to translate theory into practice. That said, Forester points to problems arising when overly motivated confidence that theory is to solve all problems. Such confidence assumes “too easily the motivating power of abstract ideals” (Forester, 2013 p. 7).

### 2.1.3 Critical views on theories of planning as a genuine conversation

The view of reaching consensus through conversation, as the basis for how to design and perform planning processes, has been criticized for many reasons. This section brings up some of the criticism given to collaborative forms of planning theory; a lively discussion, which is currently driving the subject forward.

When describing collaborative planning as a form of governance, it can sometimes be construed as a normative notion (e.g. Healey, 2009). The normative aspect of this branch of planning theory is that it tries to define what good governance is, and it is accused for trying to determine how governance is supposed to be performed. The criticism pointing to this normative aspect of theory does not necessarily inquire about how the process actually is accomplished (Flyvbjerg, 1998a; 1998b; Pløger, 2001; Watson, 2006). Therefore, the normative aspect can be described as theory directing how planning ought to be performed. This is not denied by some theorists such as Healey (2009), as mentioned above (Section 2.1.2).

The criticism of these normative aspects of collaborative theory is that the theory is trying to superimpose its values on the practice of planning (Rydin, 2007), especially in regards to the principle of consensus. This critique shows that there are many contextual issues in an ongoing planning process. One

issue is political agendas and social and historical premises that inhibit consensus building in a planning process making it impossible to reach consensus (Bolton, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 1998; 2001; 2004; McGuirk, 2001; Pløger, 2001; Watson, 2006).

One possible interpretation is that the normative aspects are criticized for being naïve in respect to how planning processes are actually performed in practice. McGuirk (2001) sustains this interpretation by stating that collaborative and participatory theory does not consider the practical reasons for why certain planning decisions are made. He thereby deems theory too abstract.

Another problem concerning the discussions is mentioned by Stephen Healy (2009) and refers to asymmetries of knowledge in relation to the issue discussed and/or the means of gathering and analyzing data for the issue at hand. Knowledge about the topics discussed and the manner in which these topics are discussed are seen as problems where rational and scientific arguments (“expert type argumentation”) seem to prevail in planning discussions. Even though the rational argument prevails in the case brought up by Healy’s (2009), he goes on to say that the rational argument does not take into consideration the local context. The local population represents local knowledge, and they might express themselves in other words and in other ways than with expert type argumentation. What Healy points to is that even if the rational argument prevails in planning situations, this might not be the best way to plan, because the local context might not be accounted for. Petts and Brooks (2006) add that collaborative methods can create problems when handling multiple types of knowledge. In order to understand and take into account such relevant issues, it is important to see the situational aspects and also regard knowledge as situational.

These and other criticisms are directed towards issues of fair and equal consideration of argumentation in the planning process (Sanoff, 2000). According to Healy (2009), there is a tendency to consider arguments from the public as value-laden and subjective, while organizations are seen as more rational actors.. Therefore, a view exists that knowledge can be depicted as a binary relationship between an expert group, or category, and a “lay” group, or category. This can lead to the challenge of categorization, where individual voices are not heard as equal inputs, but regarded as belonging to a certain category. An expert can be seen as a stakeholder with a certain role or function. These can be politicians, consultant firms or entrepreneurs who each have their own agenda. Sometimes such categories are given certain traits and attributes such as special knowledge (Irwin et al. 1999). On the opposite side of this



binary relationship are the “lay” people, the public, who are said to have local knowledge, and are sometimes judged to have views based on emotions.

Flyvbjerg (1998a) addresses critique towards the view that consensus is the priority in planning process with an example of power and politics in Aalborg, Denmark. In this example, Flyvbjerg states that consensus is not the priority of politicians in the Chamber of parliament in Aalborg, but rather arming themselves with a superior argument is. Thereby, the person with a stronger argument, even if it is not rational, prevails in the discussion. One aspect of this critique is that rationality is seen as a concept relative to its context.<sup>3</sup>

Responding to this critique is Hillier (2007) who mentions that Habermas’ theory does not recognize power relations as issues in discussions and debates. One reason why Habermas is not concerned with aspects of power is that he believes theory should be seen as a process of information gathering and learning instead of a process of power relations (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003).

Forester (2013) is another researcher who responds to this critique. He states that he does not strive for a “genuine conversation”, but declares an interest in the practical aspects of the planning processes and the uncovering of these aspects. Thereby, an interest arises in how practice is influenced by “power, inequality, and ideology” (ibid. p. 10), rather than the theories of planning, whether they are of ideal speech or of power. Forester argues his case by referring to Schön’s (1983) encouragement to look beyond theory to practice, because it is here that presumptions and theories are revealed to us as scientists and students alike.

The above brings up part of the discussion in planning research about the framework of theory as well as the relationship practice has to theory. This raises some questions about this relationship: Should there be a greater focus on the relations of power instead of saying that there is a need to reach consensus in every setting? Should research turn to practice to answer how planning is and should be conducted? What role does context play? And, what role does the situation play in how planning practice can be understood by researchers and practitioners alike? These questions address the foundation of planning research, and ask where this foundation is grounded: in theory or in practice? The following sections look deeper into these questions and conclude that the answer is partially in the details of practice.

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<sup>3</sup> This reminds of the sociocultural view understands a particular use of words and their meaning and essence as context dependent (Säljö, 2000; Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Wertsch, 1998). This opens up questions about what context is. (For further on this see 2.1.5 below.)

#### 2.1.4 Studies of practice in planning research

There are many studies of practice in planning research. This section presents some examples of how practice has been studied and discusses how planning practice and planning theory are related to each other in planning research.

One way of conducting research into planning practice and linking it to theory, is to investigate what the best way of performing practice is. This branch of planning research is often referred to as studies of “best practice” (e.g. Juarez & Brown, 2008; Rios, 2008). According to this tradition, it is possible to extract and describe the insights of a successful practice and then apply these results to the next case. Since the tradition is trying to project a view gathered from one example to another, this tradition can be seen as normative.

Other studies look at how practice relates to theory without necessarily saying that it is the “best way” of performing practice. One tradition concerned with this relationship is the pragmatist tradition of planning research. A prominent researcher of planning practice in the pragmatic tradition is Charles Hoch (1984a; 1984b; 1993; 1994; 1996; 2009) who has closely studied planning processes, and stresses that practice is knowledge in its own right.

Another classic work in the study of planning practice is Healey’s *A planner’s day* (1992), in which a planner is followed throughout the span of a day’s work. Here, communication is studied and the analysis is on the level of discourse.

In the tradition of pragmatism, Forester draws on the work of Schön (1983). Forester describes how our actions are practical “moves” in situations with practical consequences. This view states that the actions and their consequences are juxtaposed situationally. People are, therefore, participants in a situational practice, which leads to the view that people as social beings engage in situated activities. This view of practice makes it possible to study the activities to uncover and describe how practical moves are joined. The description of practice can be related to theory, and theory can be reoriented in accordance to the findings in practice. Thereby the gap between theory and practice is bridged.

With this perspective on the relationship between theory and practice, the pragmatism of Forester’s cannot adhere to any given theoretical position. Instead, his pragmatism sees practice as a level of inquiry into theory.

”Don Schön asked us long ago to look beyond espoused theories; what we might well now do would be to assess carefully and practically the often intertwined practices of sensitive dialogue, incisive debate,

and creative negotiation as they can threaten or enable robust planning processes and outcomes.” (Forester, 2013 p. 19.)

Forester (*ibid.*) provides an example of this approach of looking “beyond” theories to practice by pointing to the study of practice in order to uncover power relations instead of just talking about them theoretically. Forester (1989; 1993) argue for the study of planner’s stories and through these being able to turn towards the actions of planners. He refers to the planner’s work as interesting because of its embodiedness and articulatedness. Forester looks at how planners turn policy into practical problems, thereby describing the planner’s work as an argumentative process. Forester extracts abstract descriptions and notions from the study of practice as a way of relating practice to theory.

Flyvbjerg (2004, 2006) does not necessarily adhere to the same perspective of planning theory than John Forester or Patsy Healey but he also addresses practice in his research. Flyvbjerg asks for context to be put to the forefront of the discussion and to get closer to reality. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues for the relevance of single case studies.

Another example of how abstract notions can be extracted from practice is provided in Keith Murphy (2005) study that looks at how architects use imagining as a collaborative action when designing a building and its adjacent outdoor areas. Murphy’s study is an example of how the doings described as an activity (Garfinkel, 1967; Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Schön, 1983) are performed, how an outcome is accomplished by the architects and how these are related to the abstract notion of ‘imagination’. This shows how abstraction can actually be a practice in itself and can be studied in its own right (as proposed by e.g. Schön, 1983). Applying the same procedures to the research field of planning, there is a possibility to inform theory about how practitioners make use of abstract notions in a dialogical planning situation.

The views above provide an insight into the complexity of how planning theory and planning practice are related to each other. This said, there is a vast amount of literature not accounted for here that discusses both planning theory and research practice and the links between them. A lot of theory as well as a large amount of studies of practice have influenced the development of planning theory (for a list of works relating different views on practice to a variety of views on theory, e.g. Watson, 2006).

Some scholars are stating that there is a gap between planning theory and practice that needs to be filled. Advocators of this view are Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) and Watson (2006). In order to bridge this gap there is a need to investigate the relationship between practice and theory further. This

section has stated that one way of achieving this is to look closely at individual cases and extract the practical accomplishments as theoretical notions (for a further understanding of accomplishments see 2.2 below).

#### 2.1.5 Situated planning theory and practice

When doing research on activities and accomplishments the setting or context has relevance. This section discusses context in planning research and concludes that context, in many respects, can be regarded as situated.

Pløger (2001) argues for the importance of context in planning, and Pløger is supported by McGuirk (2001) who adds further interest to the topic of context by stating that context can be “cultural, social, political, and economic” (McGuirk, 2001 p. 213). In the theory of Habermas (1975; 1984), context and background are seen as the premise for creating understanding and is described in similar terms as by McGuirk.

Studies of planning practice relating to context can be found at many levels. There are studies that see the planning process as a holistic process, whilst there are others that enter the discourse of planning processes (Healey, 1992; Forester, 1989; 1993; 1999), and there are also studies on an interactional level (Büscher, 2005; Healy, 2003; 2009; Irwin, 1999; the papers in this thesis).

Context in the social sciences has a tendency to be seen as ‘containers’ of knowledge. The concept of “context” is regarded as a “go to” explanation containing the answers to *all* questions of social science. In this application of the concept, context is used as an explanation in itself without the need for further definition or understanding. The understanding of the phenomena that is ‘context’, is therefore problematic, and all references to ‘context’ need to be explained and elaborated on.<sup>4</sup>

Vanessa Watson (2008, p. 225) points to the situatedness of context by referring to works by Krieger (1974) and Schön (1983). Watson explains that Krieger questions models of planning that are decontextualizing and generalizing. Watson then uses Schön to argue for reflective research in which data can consist of the unfolding of situations of planning. Watson’s reason for using Schön’s work is that in the *unfolding uncertainties of situations*, conflicts

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<sup>4</sup> Epistemologically this leads to the question of how to draw out knowledge from a context, if the context in itself is not enough as a reference for knowledge (Healy, 2009). Healy gives an example of how questionnaires can be problematic tools for research in social sciences since the context is often not questioned. He writes: “Irwin and Michael underline this in their description of questionnaire research as treating people “as a repository of knowledge [t]hat is cognitive containers [from] which one can extract golden nuggets of correct knowledge, putrid lumps of incorrect knowledge, or detect the absence of any knowledge altogether” (Irwin and Michael, 2003, p. 26).

and practitioners' knowledge become apparent and it is then possible to uncover as well as make the process transparent for outsiders.

Flyvbjerg (e.g. 1998a p. 320) is also concerned with context and points to its situatedness. Flyvbjerg looks at how police officers act in accordance to what the situation requires of them rather than following the institutional directives. With this, Flyvbjerg gives an example of how situational aspects can influence the way officials act. Thus, Flyvbjerg refers to how activities are *actually* performed in the ongoing situation. The rationality of the official is produced in the situation as the event unfolds, showing the situatedness of rationality.

Flyvbjerg points to the similarities of this example with the understanding of situational accomplishments of Garfinkel and ethnomethodology (see Flyvbjerg 1998a, and section on micro-studies below). Flyvbjerg (1998a) mentions Foucault and places situational issues vis-à-vis context: "Foucault rejects both relativism and foundationalism and replaces them by situational ethics, i.e., by context." (Flyvbjerg, 1998a p. 221.) This shows that Flyvbjerg holds the view that context is relative to the events and actions of a situation. Studies of the situational context of work performed in unfolding situations are therefore key to any knowledge-building endeavor such as planning research.

The above section concludes that planning research has a tradition of looking at the practice of planners and governance processes (see 2.1.4 above). As previously discussed, activities and accomplishments are dependent on the context in which they happen and are performed. Thereby, the context can be understood as situational. Situational aspects are relevant for understanding what happens as actions unfold in a planning process.

The situational aspects of activities include the way people relate to each other and include also issues of claiming knowledge. Claiming knowledge is one way of how power and decision making emerge in planning processes (Forester, 2013; Healey, 2009). How to make claims to knowledge is the teaching of epistemology.

The epistemic dimension of studying activities, such as that of researching activities regarding planning and the urban landscape, is brought up by, for example, Irwin & Michael (2003). This thesis underscores the relevance of epistemology in public policy debate. Defining epistemology is not an easy task; however, one definition is that it describes how people make "claims of knowledge". Some questions concerning such claims to knowledge are if arguments are justified, explained, verified or validated.

There are many views on what can be considered knowledge in the subject of planning. Sandercock (1998) argues for knowledge to be necessarily multiple, and that there are multiple ways of understanding reality and a variety

of ways of knowing. According to Rydin (2007; 2008), knowledge is contrived differently by the variety of participants involved in planning processes and, therefore, must be tested.

Testing claims to knowledge is a form of validation. Rydin describes one method of validation, which she has brought from Habermas (1984). This form of validation is in the form of “speech acts” (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Speech acts are performed with the help of language, and a few examples are: “claims to truth, normative legitimacy and truthfulness” (Rydin, 2007 p. 56). Recognizing the importance of validating arguments changes knowledge from merely knowing a factual answer into the question about *how* a fact or number is actually known. This form of questioning raises the importance to look closer at the underlying motivation of an argument and the reason for a fact to be what it is. It also urges an explanation of how facts are generated in research. In other terms, the issue of how one is able to validate knowledge is of great interest in the planning process.

In addressing the various forms of validation within planning processes, it is necessary to carry out a detailed examination. To this end, Healy (2009) introduces a case study that illustrates the difference between “lay” and “expert” knowledge (and as in Paper II). It does not suffice to refer to planning processes as merely power relations where the most powerful person wins an argument. It is also not sufficient to only credit “ideal speech situations” where the most rational argument prevails.

In order to uncover in detail how claims to knowledge occur, there is a need to address the context in which planning processes take place. Seeing rationality as situational enables a diplomatic treatment of two perspectives of seeing planning processes as forums for power to prevail or that the most logical and rational argument will prevail. Instead, both perspectives might be applicable with regards to certain aspects, since the situatedness of a particular topic will determine factors of relevance for planning research. This is demonstrated by the example of policemen’s rationality described earlier (Flyvbjerg, 1998a).

To be able to integrate these practices into research, it is crucial to perform detailed studies of communicative situations in planning processes where it is possible to uncover the variety of different claims to knowledge. Thereby, planning research can continue its mission to create understanding and uncover how policy making processes can include a larger variety of views and important interests for planning processes and sustainable urban development.

## 2.2 Micro-studies

Micro-studies are a type of study that has the ability to capture activities and accomplishments by looking at a detailed level. Micro-studies are about seeing the bigger picture in the smaller details. Such as seeing strategy making and visionary work taking place in ongoing conversations and seeing discussions and policy making settings. The uncovering and scrutinizing of social events is essential in understanding how people experience their everyday activities (Healey, 2007). Micro-studies make it possible to uncover the accomplishments performed during meetings in which interactions and social activities are performed. These types of meetings are, for example, policy making meetings and settings in both governmental and governance forms.. This thesis argues the importance of gaining an understanding of how such inquiries can be performed and what exactly their utilization can reveal.

Micro-studies (Lepper, 2000; Larsson & Lundholm, 2010, Goffman, 1986) are research into micro-processes such as, for example, interactions (Sacks, 1992) and what Garfinkel calls (Garfinkel, 1967; 2002) accomplishments. An accomplishment in this research tradition is the performing of an action or engaging in an activity (Anderson & Hughes, et al. 1985), often in a social context, such as asking a time-related question, adding suggestions and input to planning discussions, or making decisions. Forester (2013, see also Paper II) writes about the performing of an action as a practical move because it has practical consequences.

Examples of studies of accomplishments can be the study of a part of a conversation or a discussion (see Sacks, 1974) in its situational context. For example, it is possible to study validation as a form of an accomplishment. Studying accomplishments makes it possible to let unfolding events in a particular situation determine how to understand the accomplishments. It is therefore possible to study the unfolding events in a conversation or a discussion (Anderson & Hughes, et al. 1985; Healy, 2009).

Since it is in the ongoing situation the uncovering of what practical consequences an accomplishment has it is on display for anyone observing the situation. This allows research to study the ongoing practice and, within it, reach the accomplishments, for example regarding participants in a meeting.

This focus on how people make things happen in conversations through accomplishments, places epistemological questions on other aspects than traditional sociology. While sociology used to be concerned with the epistemological status of its theory, this type of study places the epistemological status on the ongoing situation.

In sum, it can be said that micro-studies, as a form of inquiry into the social aspects of human conduct, plays a role in the uncovering of practical moves

and accomplishments, which are observable in the situation (Forester, 2013). What unfolds and is displayed in a situation can be observable and contestable within the situation itself. This is best clarified through the work of Wittgenstein (1953) in § 126: “Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain.” And later: “...*nothing is hidden.*” (1953, § 435). What Wittgenstein is trying to convey, is that when investigating there is nothing more to it than what is heard or seen and there is no need for theoretical explanations. Instead, what is in front of us in the situation is what needs to be uncovered and described. Therefore, the displaying and analyzing of an interaction is regarded sufficient data for understanding a human accomplishment. This tradition enables inquiries into sociocultural matters of how practical moves (Forester, 2013; Schön, 1983) are performed in planning practice and how people experience the urban context. Both are needed in planning research (Healey, 2007).

It is important to note that this research tradition, does not try to transfer results to other situations or to other data, or to generalize one example and apply it to all. The tradition strives for the integrity of every piece of data to be kept intact, so that each piece can be studied in its own right (Anderson & Hughes, et al., 1985). Thereby, the researcher’s influence on the data is, hopefully, kept to a minimum.

The current focus of policy making, which is to become processes of governance instead of government (mainly section 2.1 above), gives different forms of meetings greater importance. Micro-studies can be used to study ongoing meetings and workshops designed as forms of governance processes that increase the influence of views into the process. For example, this type of detailed analysis allows a closer look at issues about what should be considered as rational or valid arguments.

### 2.2.1 Conversation analysis

The research of Harvey Sacks on conversations leans towards the analytical and systematical as forms of inquiry (Sacks & Schegloff et al., 1974; Sacks, 1992). The type of inquiries performed within conversation analysis makes it possible to uncover social actions performed (such as speech acts) in conversational situations by reference to practical moves (Forester, 2013; Schön, 1983) made by the participants (Healey, 2009).

The tradition Sacks started has produced a great amount of instruction on how to conduct analysis of conversations (e.g. ten Have, 1999; Silverman, 1993; Schegloff, 1987). This tradition argues for detailed transcriptions of



conversations to enable the uncovering of a social situation and the ways participants talk and act in a situation.

Conversations and actions are then understood through the responses of the other participants in these actions. This leads to an interest in 'turns', where one turn is seen as having another turn following it, as in 'question (turn)-answer (turn)'. Here, the question is seen as one 'turn' and the answer as another 'turn'. The turns are related to each other, making it into a pair of turns. Such an example of a pair of turns is called adjacency pairs (Sacks, Schegloff et al., 1974).

The analysis of interaction in turns makes it possible to study the interactions of involved parties and their understanding of what is said. For example, if one person asks 'What time is it?' and another person answers 'Four o'clock', there is no apparent reason not to presume that the question relates to time and the answer is about telling what time it is. This is done in a question-answer pair. This can be understood by anyone who has knowledge of the English language. Thereby, it is possible for researchers to uncover how interactions are performed. It is also possible to uncover the accomplishments of participants in meetings and workshops by the description and analysis of the interactions in the ongoing situation.

This very detailed form of analysis has led critics to say that the tradition of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis is too detailed and can only describe specific situations and that the analysis of such situations is not transferable to other situations or larger processes. What these critiques have missed is, the philosophical background of the tradition described above. The uncovering of the social order is the purpose of the tradition, and social order is seen as the way society can function through its *situational and communicative* ways. The reason for conducting detailed analysis is to uncover the speech acts performed in the communication of the study. The reason for keeping the data in the reported material is to allow the reader to make his/her own judgment about the validity of the analysis. Thereby, the power of interpretation is in the hands of the reader instead of the researcher.

Analyzing interactions by related turns, make it possible to uncover techniques and acts of speech the participants use in settings such as collaborative planning.

### 2.2.2 Membership Categorization Analysis

In planning research today there is a debate about how to understand and perform planning in planning processes (Healey, 1998; 2009; Flyvbjerg,

1998a; 1998b; Fischer & Forester 1993; Forester, 1993; 2013; Rydin, 2007). The policy making process consists of a variety of stakeholders and actors, and the participants are even more diverse if inclusive forms of policy making are practiced. Having a certain background or the categorization of stakeholders can impact on how involved people perform within the process. For example, knowledge considered relevant for building a factory can differ depending on if you will want to operate it, or if you live in the neighbourhood where it will be built (Healy, 2009). What people say and do is the communication performed within the planning process, in the meetings and in the documents. Studying communication at a detailed level can disclose involved peoples' identities and roles. It can also reveal what topics they address, the manner in which they argue and discuss, if they are capable of generating different views themselves, or if they might be trying to just push their own agenda. Since these are one of the core questions of debates in planning today, it is warranted to uncover and describe the identity and roles of the people involved (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2009). The identity of involved parties can be studied by analysing what categories the involved parties are members of. A form of analysis especially designed for this purpose is 'Membership Categorisation analysis. This type of analysis can reveal the aspects of planning that relate to power relations and views of rationality described by, among others, Healy (2003; 2009) and Flyvbjerg (1998a).

As a form of social inquiry, Membership Categorization Analysis or MCA<sup>5</sup>, was first introduced by Sacks and co-workers (Sacks 1974; Sacks, Schegloff et al. 1974; Sacks 1992) and later developed by, among others, Watson (1997), Hester & Eglin (1997) and Schegloff (2007) as a way of uncovering the "locally used, invoked and organized 'presumed common-sense knowledge of social structures' to which members orientate in the conduct of their everyday affairs..." (Hester & Eglin, 1997 p. 3). This is because the principles of practice come to light during its performance (Jayyusi, 1984).

Housley and Fitzgerald (2009, p. 347) point to, as they call it, the "constitutive and reflexive relationship between practical action and normativity". This type of normativity can apply to categories that attach a certain responsibility if belonging to it (Jayyusi, 1984). Thereby, the person holding this responsibility displays his/her identity when performing a practical action.

Even though some responsibilities bring entitlement such as being a "planner", the measures necessary to reach the goals of planning might not always fall within responsibilities ascribed to this category. Another category

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<sup>5</sup> For a recent discussion about MCA, see the special issue of Discourse Studies and as an example Stokoe (2012).

of stakeholders with duties and responsibilities relating to planning, are politicians. The duties and responsibilities of planning is divided between the categories of planners, politicians and also others. At times related responsibilities may even overlap.

As stated in the previous section about micro-studies (Section 2.2), micro-studies look at the accomplishments of actors. If the study of responsibilities is related to the study of accomplishments of actors, the practical accomplishments of responsibilities will display a categories' social identity (Hester & Eglin, 1997). When applying this to policy-making settings, the various identities and roles of the involved parties are exposed through the ongoing conversation.

Planners can be viewed as a one category in the planning process as can other stakeholders, such as politicians, the public and so forth. In this way, different categories of social identity can be explored and described in MCA.

## 3 The Planning Process Under Scrutiny

The planning process in this study is the production of a comprehensive plan by a municipality in Sweden. This next part describes the practical setting in which the workshop-series took place. Following this is a look at how the workshop-series relates to the context of planning and the research methods used in the thesis.

### 3.1 Municipal planning in Sweden

In Sweden, the municipality has the responsibility and authority of land use planning. According to law, municipalities are given a considerable amount of autonomy over producing comprehensive plans. In this way, local governments have the greatest influence on how land is used. It is customary in Sweden that the municipality also approves and produces the plans.<sup>6</sup>

#### 3.1.1 Municipalities in Sweden

Municipalities in Sweden have a large amount of employees compared to international standards. The four biggest regions have between 18.000 to 45.000 employees respectively. The municipality in this study is one of these and includes approx 30.000 employees.

The municipality is divided into approx 15 departments and 10 district office-administrations. The district office-administration is spread out over the city and its offices are located in the various districts of the city they represent. The idea is to be able to create close relationships with its inhabitants.

There are approx 1000 managers and the city planning office has approx 200 employees. The different departments have different areas of

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<sup>6</sup> Relating this to an international reference it is much similar to what Innes & Booher (2001) writes about the situation in California.

responsibility. For example, the business office is responsible for the economic development of the city and makes sure the city is attractive for new businesses to settle. The street- and park department is responsible for the development and management of streets and parks. The areas of responsibility are not necessarily autonomous; instead, the areas of responsibility overlap and complement each other. Therefore, the departments collaborate and cooperate in developing and managing the city.

The tasks of the individual employees also differ markedly from each other, even within the same department. Everything, from drawing up plans to the gathering of information might fall within the same person's responsibility.

All this combined makes the municipality into a diverse place of employment, attracting and employing people with different demographic backgrounds, in respect to gender, nationality and educational background.

### 3.1.2 The comprehensive plan

The municipalities in Sweden are required to have an updated comprehensive plan at all times. Therefore, the municipalities have the responsibility of producing a comprehensive plan or updating their present plan every four years. The comprehensive plan is a product of "Plan- och bygglagen" (Plan- och bygglagen, 2010). This is part of the strategic planning of the municipality.

According to law (see footnote 11), the comprehensive plan is to address the long-term development of the physical environment. The comprehensive plan is not binding, but it ought to give guidance for decisions such as "how the built environment is to be used, developed and preserved, in what manner the physical planning is to be co-ordinated with national and regional goals..."<sup>7</sup> (PBL-kunskapsbanken, 2012). The law also determines that the comprehensive plan is to state how national and regional goals relating to sustainable development are to be coordinated with the comprehensive plan. Thereby, the comprehensive plan is an important tool in the process of city planning since it provides general guidance on how the city should be developed. The impact of the comprehensive plan functions on a strategic level and is referred to in the more detailed plans made by the municipality (Boverket, 2013).

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<sup>7</sup> Translated from Swedish to English by the author. The original in Swedish reads: "hur den byggda miljön ska användas, utvecklas och bevaras, hur den fysiska planeringen ska samordnas med nationella och regionala mål..."

Picture 1: Places the workshop series in the process of consultation and collaboration within the planning process. The workshop series is represented by the circles in the bottom left corner.

The planning process studied in this thesis (see pictures above) closely follows the basic guidelines recommended by Boverket (2013). They include steps for consultation (samråd), public display, and exhibition of the plan and approval by the governing body in the municipality, which expresses the importance of deliberative steps within the process.

The strategy group decided to include other meetings to further enhance the deliberative aspects of the process. These added workshops are the subject of this research project. According to the organizers of the workshops, who are the strategy group at the municipality, the workshops have following three purposes:

- Firstly, instead of a rigid comprehensive plan that specifies actions that lead to detailed regulation plans, the need for a more flexible process and ‘document’ was identified by the municipality.
- Secondly, the need for change in the management of the planning process is on the municipal agenda, which reflects the continuous search for more involvement and long-term engagement from the many different sectors and institutions at the municipality.
- Thirdly, the need for a better general understanding of the concept of ‘sustainable development’ was identified by the city. Thus, the planning process includes a set of workshops where issues and problems regarding sustainable development are discussed.

### 3.1.3 Densification as a strategy for sustainable development

As outlined above, the purposes stated by law concerning the comprehensive plan include actions of how to implement and maintain a sustainable society. In the context of sustainable city planning, a current example is the discourse (Allmendinger, 2009) or strategy (Healey, 2007) of densification, which is understood to be positive in respect to social sustainability. Many examples of this are brought forward by researchers such as Tunström (2009) and Bradley (2009). Some have also argued that densification might have negative consequences in respect to ecological sustainability (e.g. Keil 2007, Larsson 2009, Skill 2008).

Traditionally, planning discussions in discourses such as densification often focus on structures and functions (Nuissl, Haase et al. 2009) instead of fostering understanding of how people actually use a city according to its planning and design (as suggested in the section above). Today, theory argues for a collaborative and participatory approach to solving problems of sustainability. This makes it possible to suggest that sustainability does not necessarily only equal ‘climate impact reduction’, or ‘climate change

adaptability'. Instead, creating a climate friendly city is merely one of *many* aspects concerning its sustainability. Other aspects that deserve attention are the livability, the experiencing and the use of a city (Healey, 2007). A recent report published by the Konjunkturinstitut (2013) of Sweden reveals how strategic planning decisions have an influence on the economic dimension of society. There are indeed many reasons why strategies about how to develop cities are needed and these strategies need to address these important social perspectives. Research owns the opportunity to impact such sustainable development of society by studying the specifics of how people live their lives. These valuable insights certainly also have consequences for the economic dimension of society.

### 3.2 The workshop-series in this study

A number of reasons underlay the decision to focus on the process of producing a comprehensive plan in this study. First and foremost, the decision rested on the fact that it provided an opportunity to study the production of a strategic document in spatial planning. Secondly, this municipal strategy work functions with an inclusionary and governance structure that can provide answers relating to how governance processes work on a strategic level (Healey, 2007). Thirdly, this process of creating strategic documents in a Swedish context has predominantly been studied from a holistic perspective but not on the level of micro-studies. This allowed for entirely new aspects of the planning process to be studied. By allowing the research team into the meetings, with its crew and cameras, the participating parties showed their kindness and cooperation that created the needed conditions for research on these unexplored aspects to be carried out. Lastly, in Sweden comprehensive plans are important for the strategic environmental development. All these reasons combined make the topic of planning processes an important and attractive one to study.

The workshop-series studied was set up through the initiative of the strategy group at the City Planning Office who were handed the responsibility to produce a new comprehensive plan for their municipality. All departments and district administrations in the municipality were invited to participate in the workshop. Because the workshops were not intended to be formal decision making meetings, the council, executives, heads of the departments and politicians were not present. Rather, it was an informal setting that gave the opportunity for various opinions to surface.



The strategy group identified that other departments understood previous comprehensive plans mostly as documents for internal use at the City Planning Office only. This presented a problem since the comprehensive plan is supposed to be a strategic document for use by the whole municipality. Another issue of earlier comprehensive plans was their overly static and detailed approach, which made the documents perceived as 'dead' causing a desired adaptability and creativity in city planning to be limited. These findings show that earlier plans did not have the desired impact on the development of the city.

According to the City Planning Office, one reason for these problems was that other departments within the municipality had not felt included in the process of producing these plans.

These observations led the City Planning Office to try another, more dialogical, way of designing the process to produce a new comprehensive plan. One measure taken to make the process more relevant for the municipality at large was to include a workshop series that would encourage dialogue and openness within the municipality. Some further measures were taken to make the new comprehensive plan less static and detailed and therefore more 'living'. These included focusing on creating a vision for the city. To this end, the workshop series included a task on vision-building for the city and brainstorming on how the municipality could implement this vision cooperatively.

### 3.2.1 The practical outlines of the workshops

Each workshop began by serving and sharing cups of coffee with the intent to lighten the mood of the participants. While the participants got settled in, one member of the strategy group introduced the half-day schedule and explained the tasks (explained below) and the purpose of the workshop (stated above). This briefing included a short and general introduction to the process involved in producing a comprehensive plan, and how the workshops fitted into this production. Next, the tasks were introduced; the 'sun-exercise', the 'visionary-task' and the group discussion of the vision at the end of the workshop. The introduction concluded with the opportunity for participants to introduce themselves to each other.

Picture 2: Example of seating during parts of the workshop. Photograph has been distorted to uphold anonymity of the participants.

### 3.2.2 Description of exercises in the workshop, the ‘sun-exercise’

After this general introduction the initial task, the ‘sun-exercise’ was presented. The participants performed this exercise individually, and they were asked to write down eight words they associated with a ‘sustainable and attractive’ city.

Picture 3: Example of a completed sun-exercise sheet.

After the individual exercise, the participants were arranged into small groups of two or three and they jointly discussed similarities and differences about what they had written down. (The strategy group collected the material, and one member took notes on a computer during both the sun-exercise and the final part of the workshop) Afterwards, the groups presented their discussion to the rest of the participants. In total this exercise took approx 20-30 minutes.

### 3.2.3 Description of exercises in the workshops, the vision-task

The strategy group then divided the participants into new constellations of groups with again three or four members. The aim was to create groups that represent a variety of departments. Now the participants were tasked with producing a vision for the future of the city, which they had to write down in a column. Another column had to be filled out addressing "challenges, opportunities and conflicts", and a third column captured their ideas of "how to get there". They had approx 40 minutes to an hour to complete this task.

Picture 4: Example of a completed vision-task sheet.

The vision the groups were asked to produce was to represent how they envisioned the city 20-30 years into the future. This task made it possible to discuss, argue and investigate the different views of participants on how they wanted the city to develop.

The vision was supposed to function as a slogan, and reflect ways of developing the city into an attractive and sustainable city, but not include these concepts. The task was designed in this manner to make the participants think in new and more tangible terms about how to develop the city. There were two main reasons for this particular design. Firstly, the strategy group identified that at least the three of the largest cities in Sweden, based on population, use the term sustainability in their current comprehensive plans. This makes the term too unspecific and general to express anything of value about this city's development. Secondly, sustainability as a concept itself is vague and difficult to grasp.

The participants engaged with this task for approx 45 minutes to an hour. The results were then again presented to the others with the possibility for comments and discussions.

### 3.3 Research design

The research design chosen for this project was an iterative process. The iterative process was performed in accordance with the Design-Based Research method (DBR), (for further information on iterative processes see: Brown, 1992; Cobb et. al., 2003; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). The Design Based Research method studies steps of an event without interference. Feedback about future steps is given between the sessions in the event, thereby the sessions are not interrupted.

This iterative process necessitates a good relationship to the designers of the planning process for the researchers to be able to influence and study the process over time. It is also important that the ideas of the project are firmly grounded and defined in cooperation with collaborative parties (Cobb, et al., 2003; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). For these reasons this research project took place in close collaboration with the designers of the planning process at the municipality, which, in this case, were the City Planning Office and the strategy group specifically.

The research design requires the process to be shaped by the researchers during times between the sessions. Therefore, relevant information was exchanged between researchers and organizers during session breaks but never during sessions themselves.

Approximately half way through the workshop series, the research team met with the organizers. During this meeting it became apparent that both the researchers and the organizers were concerned that the participants struggled to get to the core of sustainability. Two possible causes for this were considered

a) the participants may have felt that the definition of sustainability was pre-defined and b) they might have felt discouraged to openly express their opinion about sustainability. The suggestion resulting from this discussion was to make participants feel more secure to express their opinions, and promote a sense of openness in their group discussion. Therefore, the solution decided upon was to emphasize the issue of sustainability as a wicked problem, which no one has an answer to, and also to stress the vagueness of such a concept during the introduction of the workshops. This point was already included in the briefing but had fallen short in favor of the more formal parts of the introduction, such as the time schedule for the planning process.

This meeting presented an opportunity for researchers and organizers to reflect on the design of the workshop series and address any issues that had come to the foreground, thus, making this an effective iterative process.

### 3.4 The data

This study examines video recordings of conversation during interactions in workshops concerned with policy making. The type of activity taking place during such workshops can be seen as “complex, multi-actor... work settings and learning environments” (Jordan & Henderson, 1995 p. 79), which are challenging to study. However, the use of video recordings greatly supports this study through being “a powerful tool in the investigation of human activity” (Jordan & Henderson, 1995 p. 79).

The type of material gathered was decided by the chosen setting and also what type of questions the research project aimed to answer (Silverman, 2011).

When collecting data, there are good reasons for staying as close to an empirical setting as possible.

The first reason is testability. Since the world is ever changing, studying human conduct is in some respects a unique situation of interaction. The unfolding events can be said to happen only ‘there and then’. This, of course, makes it impossible to recreate that particular situation at a later stage in order to validate results. What can be done, though, is to closely follow a situation and inform how the collection was performed and allow data to be present for as long as possible in the research process. Therefore, it is helpful to capture interactions as data that includes as many aspects of the interaction as possible as the situation unfolds.

Collecting data with the help of video- and sound recordings and transcribing it allows data to be shown through the whole process and presented in the articles. This data can be included in final products, such as in

research articles, in books, and the material can be shown at conferences, seminars and workshops where participants are able to form their own opinions about the data viewed. This form of presenting and analyzing data in a variety of settings can reduce the risk of a bias towards certain choices of analysis when a researcher is left to his/her own devices (Jordan & Henderson, 1995).

Another advantage this type of data collection provides is that a situation captured on video and/or audio recordings can be viewed multiple times by replaying the recordings. If anything was missed in the field notes, it is then possible to revisit the material at a later time and carefully observe the accomplishments that took place. For analysis' sake, the interaction can be broken into shorter segments such as transcripts and shorter video-clips.

The material used in this study was sourced from a vast audio-visual library collected during the workshops. Therefore, the researchers who were present during the workshops consciously took notes for later reference when working through the recorded materials. These notes also referred to certain episodes in the material making it easier to find particular moments of the event at a later point. Even though recorded notes can be problematic in that they can contain personal nuances about a given situation, they prove useful in navigating large amounts of visual and/or audio recordings later on and, thus, functioning as an efficient reference tool. To avoid the problems and strengthen the usefulness of taking field notes it helps if a researcher pay attention to the themes of ongoing conversations and the linguistic and extra-linguistic actions taking place and capture these diligently in his/her notes.

There can be disadvantages with researchers being present when data is collected. An example of this is when the researcher is found to interfere with a situation and affect the participants, which then can impact the results of the session. But the advantages of an observer being present are also many: occurrences of relevance for the unfolding of the activities may have taken place outside the frame of the camera (Jordan & Henderson, 1995), and can be captured by the observer. Being present also helps in getting information that can improve the understanding of the context.

In-depth interviews and follow up interviews can be used as a complement to recorded material (Silverman, 1993). This project used an informal interview style to discuss the workshop design with the organizers. Complementing video recordings with interviews can be very useful when the recordings leave unanswered questions. Examples for when interviews can greatly promote understanding are when parts of the material are difficult to read and comprehend, the material is inconclusive regarding the type of context under discussion, or something happens in the material that the researchers are unfamiliar with and would like clarification on by retrieving the

participants' understanding thereof. These interviews can also be directed towards the organizers of the settings.

The use of video and audio recordings to collect data is a method that loses little data compared to other means of collection that may not provide these opportunities. Jordan and Henderson (1995), conclude that: "video loses less, and loses less seriously, than other kind of data collection" (ibid. p. 53). The advantages of using video recordings are multiplied by Heath's (2007) argument stating that video recordings provide a unique access to social activities. Using video recordings provides the researcher with the possibility to investigate talk as well as gestures and the use of different objects in the surrounding (Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002).

The initial intention of the researchers was to look at the material with an open view. This intention is used to detect what is happening in the material and describe the basic structure of the events. The basic structure was then discussed with colleagues, both within and outside the research group, to ensure that the context of the interactions was understood from different perspectives. This clarification process also served to create descriptions for later reference and deepen one's own understanding of the material.

Next, the notes written by the researchers during the workshop-series had to be looked through. They consisted of terms and phrases, as well as actions and events of interest to the research project. Such notes can describe interactional actions, such as when one person lets someone else into the conversation, as well as occurrences of other semiotic nature, such as when a participant writes something down. In this project, the collected notes also consisted of terms relevant for planning, such as when participants talked about a certain theme, or when participants talked about how they see people make use of the city, or how planning processes are conducted as well as their opinions about this.

Workshops to be transcribed were selected from the notes and then transcribed either fully or only in part. As a member of the project team the lead researcher was involved in writing the transcriptions, which allowed him to inspect selected parts of the material in greater detail and extract even more issues of interest. Thus, episodes of relevance to the research could be compared and extracted and then discussed with a variety of parties and groups. It was also possible to return to the material throughout the entire duration of the analytical process.

The video- and sound material collected during this research project resulted in approx 120 hours of recorded interaction. Because such a high quantity of material was collected and considering the time-intensive task of transcribing, researchers had to be very selective about which parts to transcribe.

The program “InqScribe” was used for the transcriptions. Transcribing makes it easier to get an overview of the video content; however, it also involves the risk of “some loss of information in relation to the event it captures” (Jordan & Henderson, 1995 p. 53). As a first step, a rough transcription of the material served to identify different parts that proved of greater relevance for the research questions. Later these relevant parts were analyzed more thoroughly.

The transcription method was influenced by a simplified form of conversation analysis (see e.g. Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Jefferson, 1984).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the sequences identified by the researchers as relevant were analyzed with the concepts outlined in chapter 3. For further clarification, these concepts can also be found in the annexed articles.



## 4 Summary of Papers

### 4.1 Identifying ‘plannables’ regarding the topic of densification in planning, Paper I

This study provides a detailed analysis of a workshop where a group of participants engaged in a governance process concerned with the development of a comprehensive plan for a municipality in Sweden.

The paper uses Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) as a way to analyze selected sections of the dialogues during the workshop (see section 2.2.2 above for a methodological discussion).

The participants engage in a discussion around densification as a vision for the municipality. This vision is about how to make the city more sustainable to meet the future demands of climate change. First, the group agrees that densification has to accommodate something positive instead of merely increasing the number of people in the same area. After agreeing on this challenge one of the participants brings up a question about how different categories of users are going to have to share the space and therefore might come into conflict with one another. Through categorizational work the participants negotiate their responsibilities and duties in relation to other stakeholders, such as politicians and inhabitants within and outside the municipality. At the end of the discussion the participants agree upon what to take into consideration in the planning process. The act of agreeing, as argued in this paper, can be seen as a planning accomplishment. The study proposes the term ‘plannable’ to describe the success of finding agreement within a collaborative process concerned with planning. The accomplishment of the participants of reaching a plannable shows how the visions and strategies are implemented in policies and made concrete in collaborative processes; thereby,

the study identifies and draws out the larger picture through the often disregarded smaller details of governance processes.

The paper illustrates how this level of analysis can provide valuable insight into how the collaborative settings can produce knowledge for planning. Through the methodological approach the study also points to the situatedness of planning practice and how such situations can reach results. This emphasizes the importance to study planning practice as an embodied and situated practice that can foster understanding of the challenges and possibilities involved in planning and collaborative settings.

The final point Paper I has shown how divergent interests might exist in discussions. This does not exclude the possibility of reaching agreement on issues relevant to planning, or a “plannable”, and, therefore, the divergence is not necessarily impossible to overcome. The agreements, however, might not be of consensus nor the the most rational solution, but might be the most relevant for the context. Thereby, *reasoning* can be performed within a planning process rather than allowing the most “rational” argument to prevail.

#### 4.2 Listening carefully: Understanding in a deliberative planning process by the use of a micro-study, Paper II

This study describes how participants address the issues of planning by *listening carefully* to each other’s input in a collaborative situation. The study makes use of analysis at micro-level, and it uses video- and sound recordings for data collection. This enables the material to be scrutinized in detail by analyzing the conversations turn-by-turn. This detailed scrutinizing makes it possible to uncover the practical accomplishments of the participants and the conversation can be judged in accordance to the participants’ own words instead of the researcher’s interpretations.

The study brings up a number of examples of how participants dismiss, rebut, take into consideration, evaluate and accept each other’s inputs. This demonstrates the variety and multitude of ways people can have their voices heard in a governance process. Thereby, the study helps to enrich the view of communicative planning theory and its suggested application in practice, where at times this approach is claimed to be normative and idealistic. In addition, the study shows it has been shown how a collaborative situation can be set up and performed. Important to note here is that the study does not aim

to define how collaborative situations have to be designed nor does it make any other normative claims; instead, the study explains the ways that participants in such a setting can perform planning. The results show that a collaborative setting can function as an arena for participants to be creative, which consequently has a strong bearing on practice and thereby negates the notion of it being an entirely idealistic goal. Highlighting the situatedness of policy making, the research findings clearly show that a collaborative setting can be full of opportunities and possibilities for the participants. Proving the above concepts, the research project has successfully related practice to the abstract notion of inclusion often discussed in planning theory.

The study outcomes confirm that a workshop can function as deliberative planning process, described by, for example, Bevir (2012) and operate as a form of governance process.

## 5 Concluding Discussion

A multitude of research approaches exist to thoroughly scrutinize policy making and planning processes as forms of governance. This research study has considered the expert opinion of Healey, a prominent researcher in this field, who ascertains that studies of micro-processes are important in order to gain a “rich grasp of how visions, strategies and policy ideas get translated into practice” (Healey, 2000 p. 920). To this end, the project adopted a micro-study approach for its analysis and also elaborated further on the topics introduced by Healey. Furthermore, the study was able to clearly illustrate that, in fact, the uncovering of such micro-processes can contribute to a much greater understanding of how visions, strategies and policy ideas are developed and incorporated into the planning process. In conjunction with other methods, micro-studies are also capable of demonstrating how the bigger picture is incorporated in the very details of planning.

Over the last decades other research fields have investigated social events in numerous different social settings using micro-studies. Despite its popularity and effectiveness, micro-studies have not been readily applied to a great extent of research on the process of governance or planning. However, this research approach proved to target the core intentions of the project, which can be summarized with following three aims. First, the research was to increase democratic relevance of such meetings by exploring and describing the ways in which people are let into conversations. Second, it needed to be clarified what exactly was required for understanding to be reached and lastly, was the exploration of different speech acts and how they are performed within planning conversations.

By performing these micro-studies, it was discovered that full consensus does not necessarily *have to* be reached for a planning process to be successful and achieve relevant goals and knowledge. On the contrary, the thesis argues and has clearly illustrated that different voices and perspectives can co-exist,

be heard and listened to; accomplishments can be made and results produced even though consensus is not reached.

This must not be misunderstood as an argument for governance to be abandoned as a form of planning. Instead, the thesis says that broadening the insights of practice can transform planning theory to become “usefully critical... and appropriately positive” (Richardson, 2005 p. 347) by helping a variety of voices to enter policy making processes. Thus, it also contributes to the view that practice can influence theory. In planning theory, there is a need for research on planning practice. This need exists on many different analytical levels and addresses the understanding and uncovering of how planners perform their practical work.

Studying planning practice allows to further develop theory; and the broader the spectrum of analytical work, the broader and deeper the understanding of theory. It is important to look at planning processes from a variety of perspectives. Detailed studies of planning practice is one possible avenue to conduct studies on how practice can influence theory and broaden the foundations of the dialogical forms of planning as well as have positive impacts on ways of conducting planning (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). This can assist the understanding of ways in which peoples’ diverse interests and views can enter a planning conversation and it can also clarify how participants explain and validate their own views and opinions. Planning research is given the opportunity to move forward by adding new perspectives about its foundation.

Studying the details and uncovering the ways and means people make use of to include a greater variety of voices and views in ongoing communication reveals how policy making settings can function as solutions to the issue of only single voices entering and dominating a debate. This points to the possibility of reaching a solution to the problem of planning processes ending in a divergent interaction. The research project witnessed instances in its planning sessions where opposing views were welcomed into the discussion and could be reflected upon rationally. This shows that it is possible for divergent views to enter a discussion in collaborative planning processes and for results to be achieved despite such diverging interests.

## 6 Future Research

This thesis has explored methodologies for uncovering, analyzing and explaining the multitude of ways participants can set straight divergent views. But there is room for further studies into this phenomenon. It is also possible to study meetings where politicians are present. This project set out to find such a setting, but this aspect fell short because the invited politicians declined participation in this kind of research at the time. Hopefully, this thesis will create the opportunity for researchers to be present at political meetings in the future, especially knowing that anonymity of the study participants is firmly upheld.

Another possible direction research could take, is the uncovering of everyday knowledge of how features of society are organized, as discussed by Healey (2007). Healey comments that knowledge of the *social* is the knowing *by doing* and by *experiencing*. This relates to Schön's work (1983) on how knowledge is the knowing through the *doing*, the performing and understanding that is inherent in the practical accomplishment. It can be evolved into practical accomplishments as practical 'moves' leading to practical consequences (Forester, 2013).

Examples of these practical experiences that we have knowledge about are explained by Healey (2007, p. 246) as the knowing of *doing waiting* for the bus, the knowing by *doing picking up* the kids at the day care. These knowledge-experiences of everyday life in the urban landscape are of importance and need to be incorporated into planning conversations and discussions, and this knowledge needs to enter the plans. Here, research can play a significant role; it can contribute by capturing these aspects of planning conversations as well as studying people's conduct out in society. These results can then inform planning strategies for future cities and urban areas. Micro-studies are one way of getting to the core of this everyday knowledge and experience. This thesis has made headway in addressing these aspects in the

context of planning conversations. However, further research is needed to continue to develop these themes in planning conversations as well as in the city landscape.

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